

WILDE IN UTICA.

THE LAST SWEET THING IN OSCAR'S.

A Genuine Sensation at the City Opera House—Wilde Unfolding the Flawless Essence of His Kosmic Soul Under the Auspices of the Household Art Rooms—Getting Down from His Pedestal of Daffodils and Coming in Contact With Oneida County Snow Banks and an Inquisitive "Observer" Reporter.

Oscar Wilde reached Utica at 5:15 yesterday afternoon and departed at 11:22 to-day. The young poet was expected earlier, but, as Conductor Ferrell remarked: "The glaukous-haired disciple of poesy is nothing if intelligible." Oscar's coming was eagerly anticipated. Public opinion in regard to the young Oxford graduate is so divided that while some insist he is only "utter," many urge that there is a method underlying it all which stamps Wilde as a level-headed money getter. Candidly, he doesn't look like a fellow whose nerves are constantly thrilling like throbbing violins in exquisite pulsation. In his eyes there is nothing of the "long delight of soft communion with sweet antiphonal souls." Not a bit of it. Wilde came to Utica in a drawing-room car like any one else, and when he shook hands with Commissioner Earle and Architect Cooper, no one about the depot suspected that the young Irishman had a Kosmic soul or that he dealt in mystic symphonies. He did not even flaunt the burnished disk of the sunflower, and as for a lily—it would have been paralyzed by the surrounding snow banks in seventeen seconds. Wilde is a remarkable creation. If he is playing a part in his tour through this country, he is a finished actor. If he is "acting out" himself, he is simply unique. No picture that has yet appeared does him justice. It has been either an extravagant burlesque or a colorless reproduction of his pale, classical features and long hair. Wilde is 26 years of age and six feet two inches in height. He has an interesting face of feminine mould, and when he speaks shows a fine upper row of teeth. His accent and manner is that of a refined cockney. He speaks slowly, with just a suggestion of the Dundreary drawl. His sentences are long but he carries an idea with or behind them. He is perfectly self-possessed and his individuality or egotism is constantly apparent. Speaking to the writer of his experience in this country, last evening, he said:

WILDE'S IMPRESSIONS OF AMERICA.

"Your country is vast. I suppose I have no conception of it as yet, but your distances are very remarkable."

"You are simply on the borders of the Continent, Mr. Wilde."

"Y-a-a-s, so I am informed. In our own ugly little island we cannot appreciate the vastness of America. You call it a country, but I call it a w-o-r-l-d."

"You have spoken every night since you began lecturing, have you not?"

"Y-a-a-s, but not always to an audience. It is not my lecturing that tires me. The sensation is so novel I fairly enjoy it. The excursions of traveling are wearisome, and then there have been so many receptions and pleasant little entertainments. America is a constantly growing wonder to me. You are decidedly cosmopolitan. There is a suggestion of all countries about you, and I have yet to meet the Yankee as a distinctive character."

Wilde attracts much attention. He wears an olive-green overcoat, gaily trimmed, a low, wide collar and a necktie of mammoth proportions and gradated colors. As he stepped from the train he placed the fingers of his right hand gracefully to the side of his face, and whether this movement was natural or mere affectation will never be known. His dress throughout was "a symphony of color" down to the patent leather shoes with decorated uppers of cream-colored broadcloth. He has the stooping shoulders and the gait of *Bunthorne*; but this, together with his cockneyed accent, is as natural as running water. In full evening dress Wilde is a revelation. He looks younger, more æsthetic and more ethereal. Last night he wore the most pronounced fashionable evening costume ever seen in the Valley of the Mohawk. We shall not attempt to describe it save to remark that Wilde wore it with a naturalness and grace that is inimitable.

THE LECTURE.

The lecture was given under the auspices of the Household Art Rooms. The audience that listened to it was a large and cultivated one. The stage was handsomely set and covering the desk in the centre was a rich drapery embroidered with lilies. The lecturer glided upon the stage with a movement that suggested a change in the dance known as "the German." In slow, measured monotone he unfolded the text of his discourse. In England, he said, the aim of the new artistic movement was "to search out, in our great, ugly manufacturing cities, those men and women who can work with their hands as well as their minds and hearts. Such as your life is, so is your art sure to be. The spirit of art is one and eternally the same. Byron was a rebel and Shelley a dreamer, but Keats was the forerunner of the pre-Raphaelite school."

Before the lecture began Wilde said to the writer: "There is just one criticism which the American press has passed on me that I do not like. I do not think I deserve it. Here in this account (the reporter handed him a slip from the *Albany Argus*) they say I am not practical. I should like to meet that horrid Albany fellow and I believe I could convince him that I am practical. I want you to listen to what I say about the workman." His allusion to the handicraftsmen was made in these words:

"Great movements must originate with the workmen. I believe in practical art. I believe the musical value of a word is greater than its intellectual value and nowhere is this better exemplified than in that supreme imaginative work of the young American who wrote 'The Raven.' To educate and refine a country you must begin with the masses. There must be stately and simple architecture in your cities and bright and simple dress for men and women. You should have among your people some permanent canon and standard of taste. Creeds and philosophies decay, but beauty is the only thing time cannot harm. We should have in our houses things that gave pleasure to the men who made them."

THE GOOD IN ART.

The good in art is not what we directly learn from it but what we indirectly become through it. All the arts are fine arts and all the arts are decorative arts. By separating the handicraftsman from the artist you ruin both. Labor without art is merely barbarism. Decoration is the form of expression of the joy the handicraftsman has in his work. Design is the study and result of cumulative habit and observation. I believe in the elevation and education of the poorer classes. I want to see the homes of the humble beautiful. The rich in England have too many beautiful things—more than their share—they might very well be divided."

After the lecture Wilde received an informal reception at the residence of Ex-Mayor Hutchinson. He is more entertaining when met socially than upon the rostrum. He is a young man of ideas, a wide reader and a close observer. He says the assertion that he is not practical is the only distasteful stricture that has been passed upon him in this country.

"But your reception in Music Hall, Boston, by the Harvard boys?"

Wilde smiled. He rarely laughs. It was a smile that displayed to the best advantage that fine row of teeth and flashed the merest suspicion of "the whites of his eyes."

"Y-a-a-s, you know, but I enjoyed it—merely a bit of badinage from the college boys. I understood it, for I know how it is myself."

"When do you expect to return to England?"

"Late in April. I shall spend June in Paris and then go to Venice. No, this is not my last visit to America. I want to see your country in the summer and autumn."

A gentleman asked Mr. Wilde to explain the secret of the sunflower and lily craze. The lecturer said: "I regard those flowers as the most perfect models of design—the most naturally adapted for decorative art—the gaudy, leonine beauty of the one and the precious loveliness of the other giving to the artist his best ideas. Here in Utica you have art rooms. Cultivate them. You have young artists. Cheer them on in their race through the meadows."

A full report of Mr. Wilde's lecture would fill five columns of this paper. We present below a few sentences verbatim, in order to give those readers who did not hear him an idea of his style:

And so with you; let there be no flower in your meadows that does not wreath its tendrils around your pillows, no little leaf in your Titian forests that does not lend its form to design, no curving spray of wild rose or briar that does not live forever in carved arch or window of marble, no bird in your air that is not giving the iridescent wonder of its color, the exquisite curves of its wings in flight, to make more precious the preciousness of simple adornment; for the voices that have their dwelling in sea and mountain are not the chosen music of liberty only. Other messages are there in the wonder of wind-swept

heights and the majesty of silent deep-messages that, if you will listen to them, will give you the wonder of all new imagination, the treasure of all new beauty. We spend our days, each one of us, in looking for the secret of life. Well, the secret of life is art.

After the reception at Mr. Hutchinson's last evening, Mr. Wilde was entertained at the Utica Club.

This morning, at half-past ten, upon invitation of Messrs. Earle, Cooper and Latimore, Mr. Wilde visited the Household Art Rooms and met a large company of ladies and gentlemen. He wore a light velvet coat and other apparel perfectly harmonized and attuned to said velvet coat. After the members of the company had been introduced the poet inspected the features of the art rooms alternately praising and criticising what he saw. The tapestry struck his fancy; the bust of Venus he did not like. The embroideries were pronounced superior, "but," (turning to Mr. Cooper) "don't let your young ladies paint landscapes on plaques."

After half an hour's chat with the ladies, in which decorative art was discussed in all its length, breadth and border, Mr. Wilde shook hands with some, bowed comprehensively to the rest, donned his olive green overcoat, muffled his throat in a silken scarf of gradated wine color, put on his gloves and was driven to the depot. There he wrote his autograph and assured a friend that he should always remember with pleasure his visit to Utica.

Wilde is a brainy boy. Peculiar, but he makes his peculiarities profitable.